

Prince George's County Historic Site Summary Sheet

Survey No.: PG76A26

Name: **Helen Knox House**

Date: 1938

Location: 5115 Auth Road, Suitland, Maryland

Description: The Helen Knox House, built in 1938 on a half-acre of land purchased from the Wood family, is a modestly scaled, frame, ell-shaped dwelling utilizing the popular Colonial (Georgian) Revival style popular in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. The Knox house retains the traditional I-house form and utilizes industrially-produced, and traditionally-styled millwork to ornament the entrance.

Significance:

The Helen Knox House is one of about one dozen dwellings in the area bounded by I-495 Suitland Parkway, MD 5, and Suitland Road which was constructed at least fifty years ago. This area was largely agricultural until Robert Warren Ammann started the development of speculative housing in the 1950's with "Auth Village". The ever-accelerating pace of development has resulted in the dense pattern of large commercial, educational, office and residential building complexes which has obliterated the previous agrarian land patterns.

The Helen Knox House is an undistinguished example of the highly popular eclectic house form popularized by merchant builders for the tradition-bound civil servants and workers streaming into the area in search of cheap housing after World War II. Although among twelve structures identified in the project area which are fifty years old, the Knox House is an undistinguished example of a widespread revival and eclectic house form.

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

HISTORIC CONTEXT

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period (s): Industrial-Urban Dominance, 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s): Architecture

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Suburban

Historic Function and Use: Domestic/Single Dwelling/Residence

Known Design Source: Unknown

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No PG76A26

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Helen Knox House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 5115 Auth Road N/A not for publication

city, town Suitland _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district _____

state Maryland _____ county 20746

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Richard and William Wood

street & number 11301 Maryvale Road telephone no.: 301 423 0465

city, town Upper Marlboro state and zip code Maryland 20772

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Courthouse liber 11221
694
street & number folio

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local _____

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Survey No. PG76A26

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

See Continuation Sheet 7.1

8. Significance

Survey No. PG76A26

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	ca. 1938	Builder/Architect	Unknown
----------------	----------	-------------------	---------

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

See Continuation Sheet 8.1

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No PG76A26

Personal Communication ith William Wood, Shirley Eppart
Land Records of Prince George's County

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .59 acreQuadrangle name AnacostiaQuadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rita M. Suffness, Leader, Cultural Resources Grouporganization State Highway Administrationdate July 6, 1997street & number 707 Calvert Streettelephone 301 589 0659city or town Baltimorestate Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

DHCP/DHCD
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Description
Continuation Sheet 7.1

Description Summary

The Helen Knox House, built in ca. 1938 on a half acre of land purchased from the Wood family, is a modestly scaled frame ell-shaped dwelling utilizing the Georgian-Colonial revival style popular in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. The Knox House retains the traditional I-house form and utilizes industrially-produced, traditionally-styled millwork to ornament the entrance.

Description

The Helen Knox House is a modest, frame, two-story dwelling located on a small parcel between Auth Road on the north and I-495 on the south. A side-gable structure, with the principal elevation oriented to the west, it has a traditional ell-shape--a gable-roofed wing extends to the rear (west). It has, in turn, been extended with a one-story screened porch. A small garage is located to the south of the dwelling. It has been sheathed with white aluminum siding, with trim painted green to accent the wooden window and door surrounds and cornices. A single concrete block chimney is located midway on the gable peak on the main block.

The principal part of the house is a three bay by two bay deep rectangular, gable roofed structure. The principal (west) elevation is composed of an entrance, embellished with Colonial Revival-derived door surround centered between two windows. Directly above these windows are identical eight-over-eight sash wood windows located in the forward plane of gable-roofed wall dormers.

The north and side elevations are the locations of identical one-story semi-octagonal bay windows, surmounted by a single sash, six-over-six window at the second story level with a semi-round window in the gable ends near the peak. As the south elevation has been extended with a wing to the east, a secondary bay (to the east) is the location of a secondary door at the first floor level surmounted by a six-over-six sash window above. In the ell on this elevation are two windows at the second level with the frame integral with the cornice, and a paired set of small windows below. The roofline of the eastward extension, two bays deep, has a gable roof lower and perpendicular to that of the main block. It was not identical, as the south elevation has an almost full length Garrison-type, shed-roofed, continuous dormer, whereas the south elevation has a more typical dormer, two bays wide with a hip roof. The east elevation of this ell wing is partially obscured with a gable roofed, one-story screened porch shifted to the south side. The fenestration is irregular: a doorway is located off-center (to the south) with a six-over-six light to the south, and a squatter six-over-six light to the outside wall (not within the porch). A garage, just south of the house, is rectangular in plan, with two garage doors in the west bay. It is in poor condition.

This house, constructed in 1938 by Helen Knox shortly after her purchase of the property from Thomas and Linda Wood (Land Record Liber 497, Folio 160), is an example of the eclectic houses and cottages which were popular in the period from 1870 to 1940. These eclectic dwellings drew upon many historical prototypes, including the Queen Anne, Bungalow, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, etc. The fervor for American culture that swept the country after the 1876 Centennial resulted in the particular interest in the revival of two colonial house types: the Georgian and Cape Cod styles. The vernacular versions of these two forms retained the outward massing of the original forms with possibly some vaguely historically-derived trim, available in stock form, embellishing the exteriors. The interior of these usually small, merchant-built houses is characterized by a modern open plan. The addition of side porches, terraces, sunrooms and the like were concessions to modernity. The colonial revival cottage was a very successful house form, popular with the merchant builders who constructed speculative housing in the newly

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Description
Continuation Sheet 7.2

developing suburbs after World War II. The burgeoning population of the District of Columbia, increasingly drawn to the areas just outside of the D.C. border, sought modest houses with vague references to the historic past. The revival styles were so popular that the designers and builders of speculative housing confined the range of styles to feature a preponderance of Georgian Colonial revival and Cape Cod cottages, along with brick ramblers. This accounts for the dearth of modernist twentieth century styles highly popular in other parts of the United States, such as the Ranch, Split Foyer, Contemporary styles, etc. For example, only one of the designs of the venerable architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, were constructed in the general Washington area. One of his popular Usonian houses, the Pope-Leighey House, survives in the Virginia suburbs.

The Knox House retains the traditional I-house form and utilizes some vaguely Georgian-revival millwork to ornament the entrance. The use of shutters in this house reflects the widespread pattern of vernacular housing to use shutters for picturesque effects. The interchangeability of parts (which typifies dwellings of this sort) was tied to the industrial production of architectural materials with little relation to traditional use.

Historic and Geographic Context: This property is located on the western side of Prince George's county abutting the District of Columbia. A suburb of Washington, D.C. the area is characterized by densely built-up residential neighborhoods crossed by several main arterial roadways lines with commercial strip malls. Before the 1950's this area of Prince George's County was generally rural and agricultural with few small crossroads settlements. The only crossroads within the area which developed an identity was "Wood's Corner," named for a fruit stand, no longer extant, operated in the twentieth century by the Wood family. It serviced the few farms and the very small population that existed prior to 1950 near the intersection of MD 5 (Branch Ave) and Auth Road, an area currently overwhelmed by commercial development, especially mammoth automobile dealerships. Although some suburban development had taken place on the fringes of this area in the 1940's, it was not until the cessation of World War II that widespread development and suburbanization began in this area of Prince George's County.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Suburbanization of Prince George's County

The earliest suburbs of Prince George's County date to the late nineteenth century and are located in the northern section of the County. After the Civil War, Washington took on a "boom town" atmosphere and in a tight housing market, Washington residents began to look outside the District for housing. The initial growth occurred in the previously settled towns along the B & O Railroad north of the district, there the new residents could enjoy the established local amenities (Virta 1984:190). These towns included Hyattsville, Bladensburg and Beltsville. Other developments were constructed more specifically as railroad suburbs. These places included Riverdale Park, Berwyn and Berwyn Heights, College Park and Takoma Park, all constructed in the late 1800's.

However, as the northern sections of the County were experiencing steady development, the western section of the county remained virtually undisturbed. Both the 1861 Simon Martenet Map and the 1878 Hopkins Atlas of the "Spaulding District" show a sparsely settled area with small settlements around Suitland, Silver and Camp Springs outside of the area in which this site is located. The 1955 USGS map (Anacostia Quadrangle) shows that the area was still primarily agricultural as late as the 1940's. The development of the area did not begin until the early 1950's, with the bulk of it occurring within the last two decades, when the growth was intense. There are a number of factors that contributed to this massive development of the rural countryside in the county, including the expansion of the Federal Government in the 1940's, the overall development of roads and bridges linking the areas to Washington, and the movement of Federal government agencies and facilities to the new suburbs.

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Description
Continuation Sheet 7.3

The increase in the Federal work force began in the 1930's with the initiation of the New Deal and continued through World War II and on into the 1950's. This explosive expansion was attended by a rise in land values and property taxes, which again sent the Washingtonians into the suburbs in search of affordable housing. What distinguished this expansion from the late nineteenth century suburban development was its spread into previously undeveloped area, principally into western Prince George's County. This was made possible by the automobile; the automobile allowed for development away from the railroad lines, which had limited the earlier nineteenth century developments. In addition, road improvements throughout the county as well as bridge improvement over the Potomac provided easy access to the District and made a daily commute into the district a possibility.

Plentiful land at low cost motivated the Federal government to locate offices in the suburbs as well. The Suitland Federal Center opened in 1941 on the north side of Silver Hill Road. The complex was constructed on 285 acres of land and was built to house up to three thousand employees of the Federal Bureau of the Census, Navy Hydrographic Office and a file office of the Public Roads Administration (Evening Sun, August 14, 1942).

Another major development in the area was the construction of Andrew's Air Force Base near Camp Springs. Building began in 1941 on approximately 4000 acres of farm and open land. A few years later the Suitland Parkway was constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers to provide safe and rapid access to the air base from Washington. Carrying traffic south and west of Suitland, the parkway also provided better access for Washington commuters to the growing neighborhoods on either side of the road. These factors drew commuters and developers out to this section of Prince George's County bordered by Suitland Parkway on the north, MD 5 on the west, I-495 on the south and Suitland Road on the east. The result was the rapid construction of speculative housing and new neighborhoods. Some of the housing was constructed around the core of older settlements and some represented completely new developments.

Development in the Study Area

The only village in the immediate vicinity of the historic site that pre-dates 1950 is Morningside, however, it was only extended to the west side of Suitland Road in the 1960's and 1970's with the construction of subdivisions known as Andrews Estates, Skyline, Skyline Hills and Tournament Court. The original portion of Morningside, located on the east side of Suitland Road, was built over a number of years beginning in 1938-39 by developer Morgan Wayson and his brother-in-law Randolph Hopkins. The original subdivision contained approximately 500 homes and most were two-story Cape Cod style cottages on the east side of Suitland road. It housed veterans of World War II and their families, plus workers in the Federal Center in Suitland, its close neighbor (Prince George's County Magazine, 1983: 55). Most of the development of Morningside took place in the 1950's after it was incorporated in 1949.

With the construction of the Andrews Air Force Base and the improvement to MD 5 (Branch Avenue) in the 1950's, the Camp Springs area, which is also outside of the study area, witnessed the construction of several suburban developments. One development was Middleton Valley, located off Old Branch Avenue, on the fringes of the western edge of the project area. This development was created after old farmland belonging to the Middleton family was subdivided and made into a residential suburb. Additional subdivisions developed in the last few decades in the vicinity of the old Middleton property are Broadview and Stan Haven.

In the project study area some of the agricultural properties owned by the Auth, Darcey, Soper, Thornton and

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Description
Continuation Sheet 7.3

Wood families survived until fairly recently, as the subdivision and development of the farms did not begin until the 1950's .

Of the twelve historic structures remaining in the project area, seven date to the first quarter of the twentieth century. These are: Thornton-Wood Farmstead (PG76A24) , Milstead House (PG76A27), John and Marie Darcey Houses (PGA7631), Anthony Soper House (PG76A34), Eugene Darcey House (PG76A32), John Mulloy House (PG76A29), and the Roland Darcey Houses (PG76A32. Five properties date to the second quarter of the twentieth century. These are: Ammann House (PG76A33), Holmes House (PG76A30), Knox House (PG76A26), L. and R. Lawnmower (PG76A25) and the Marescalco House (PG76A21).

The development of Auth Village by the Darcey (and the related Ammann) families in the 1950's started the rush to subdivide by other families, resulting in developments like Manchester Estates, Darcey Manor, Darcey Estates, Andrews Village, Andrews Manor and Woodlane, which were constructed since 1950 on the farmland previously owned by these families and utilized primarily for truck farming. Long time families in the area report that Auth Road was a dirt lane, called Epiphany Lane, until well into the sixth decade of the twentieth century. Its intersection with the predecessor (Old Branch Avenue) of MD 5 was known as Wood's Corner for the fruit stand and farm owned by the Woods (and Soper) families. Across from it on the west side of Old Branch Avenue was Pat's Carryout and Restaurant (PG76A25), currently housing the L and R Lawnmower, and which was discontinued in the 1960's. The history of the study area exemplifies the history of rapid suburbanization, a process that has affected both the function and appearance of the region. In less than fifty years, the area went from a rural, agricultural region of Prince George's County to a modern, bedroom suburb of Washington, D.C. This suburbanization continues at breakneck speed today.

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Significance
Continuation Sheet 8.1

Significance Summary

The Helen Knox House is a modest Colonial Revival style structure dating to 1938 in the Wood's Corner area of Prince George's County. Its traditional I-house form has been embellished with typical industrially-produced architectural millwork. This eclectic house form typifies vast numbers of speculative houses of the Washington, D.C. suburbs.

Statement of Significance

The Helen Knox House was constructed in 1938 on a half acre of land purchased from the Wood family. It is located in an area which was largely agricultural until the 1950's. This property is located close to the intersection of Auth Road, named for a former farm located on the opposite side of I-495, and MD 5, identified as the "T B Macadam Road to D.C." (Land Records Liber 88/27).

This intersection was identified as "Wood's Corner" for the fruit stand which was formerly located adjacent to the roadway and run by the Wood family. With the advent of speculative house building which ensued in the 1950's after Robert Ammann started constructing Auth Village well north and east of this house, the area was rapidly developed. As a result the Helen Knox House is hemmed in between Auth Road on the south, I-495 on the south, and by large educational, commercial and office complexes on all sides.

Although among twelve structures identified in the project area which are fifty years old, the Knox House is an undistinguished example of a widespread revival and eclectic house form. There is no known connection with person or events significant in American history, thus it does not appear to meet the requirements of Criteria A and B for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is not an outstanding example of a particular type or style of architecture qualifying it for Register listing under Criterion C. Having no known archeological significance, it would not likely meet the requirements of Criterion D for yielding information important in history or pre-history.

PG-76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland

Bibliography
Continuation Sheet 9.1

Evening Sun, August 14, 1942.

Hopkins, G. M. Atlas of Prince George's County, 1878. Reprint edition. Prince George's County Historical Society, 1975.

Norton, Darlie. "A History of Suitland." Privately Printed, 1976.

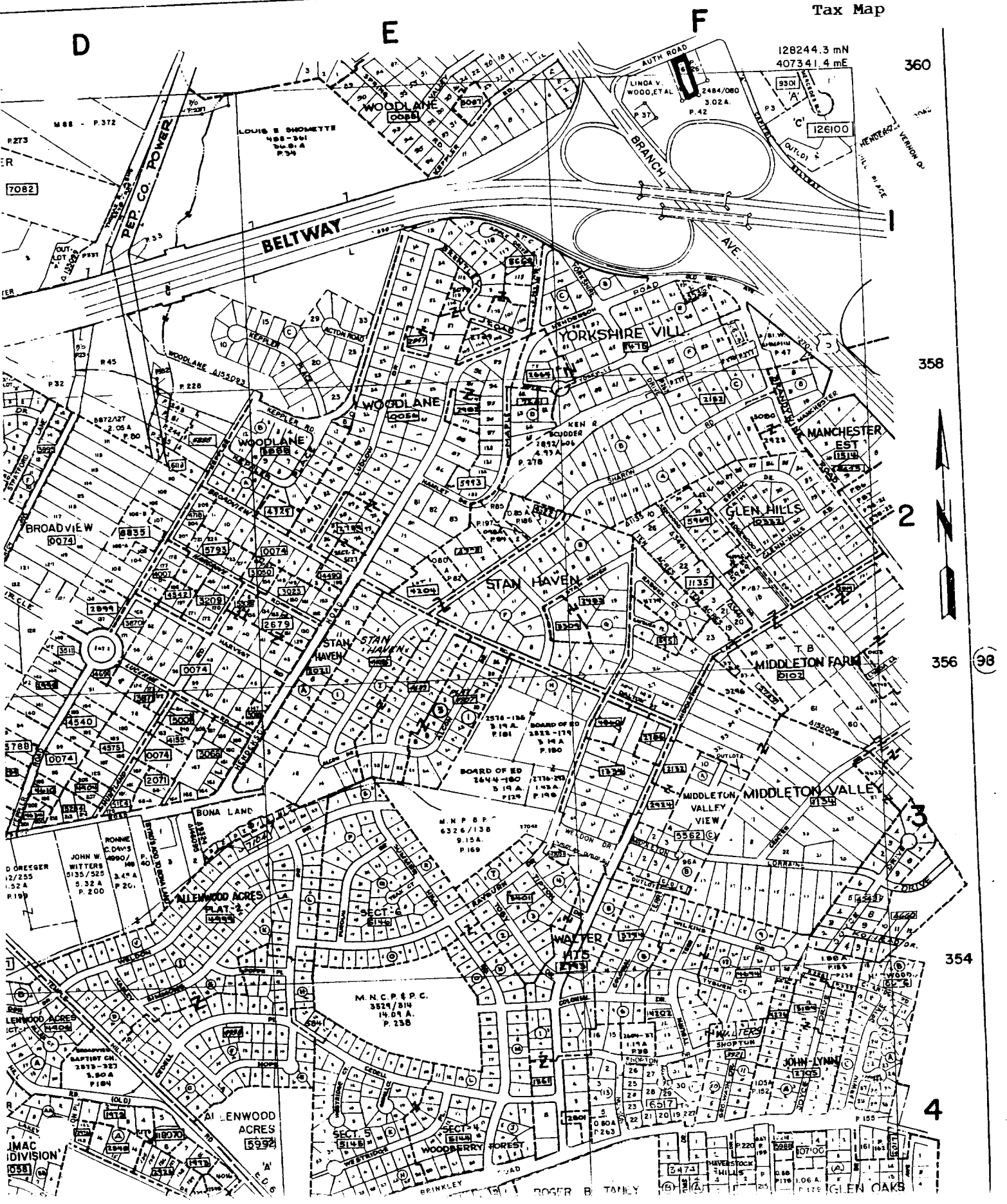
Prince George's County Community Renewal Program "The Neighborhoods of Prince George's County." Upper Marlboro, MD: Prince George's County, 1974.

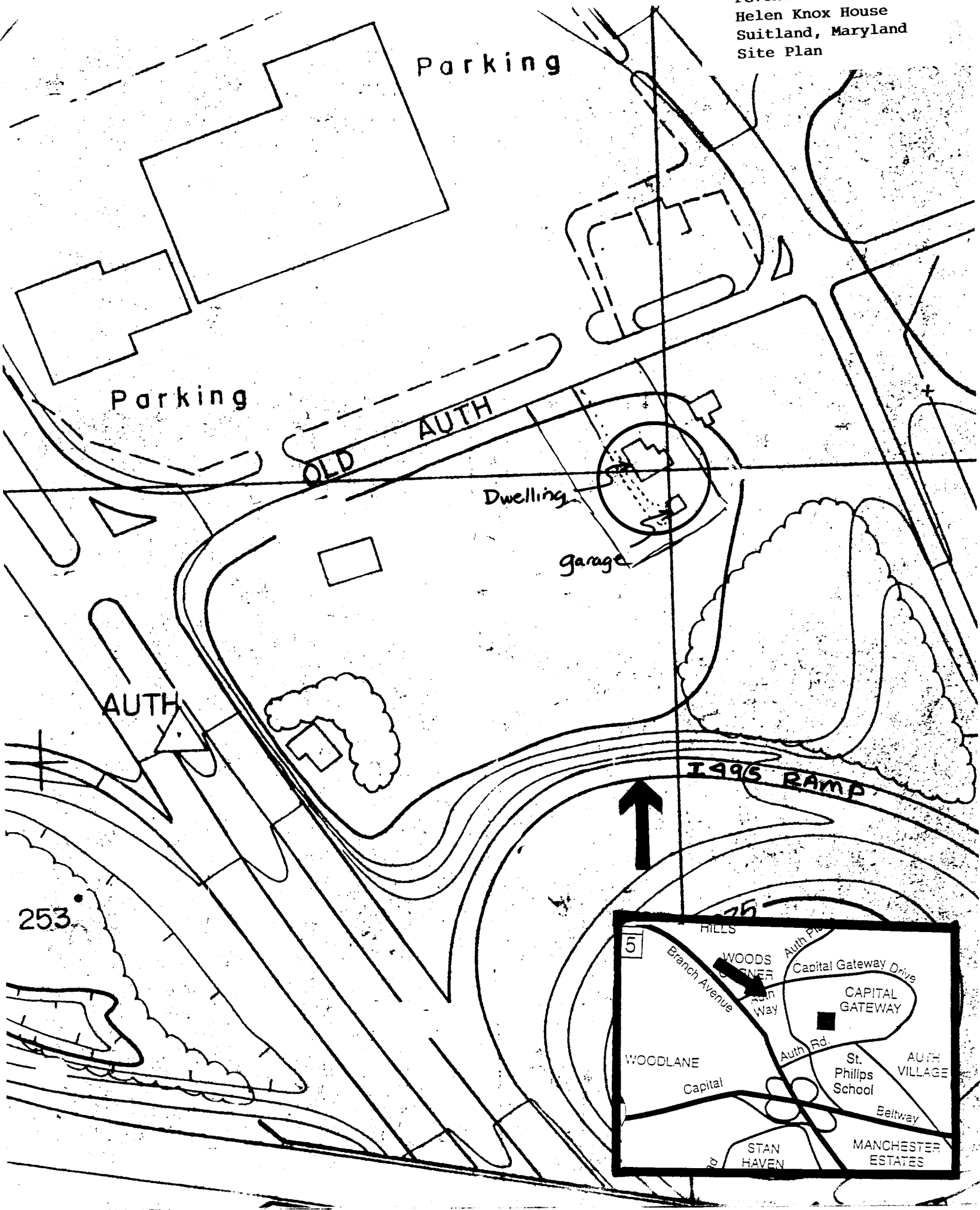
Prince George's County Magazine, 1983: 55.

Virta, Alan. Prince George's County: A Pictorial History. Norfolk, VA: the Danning Company, 1984.

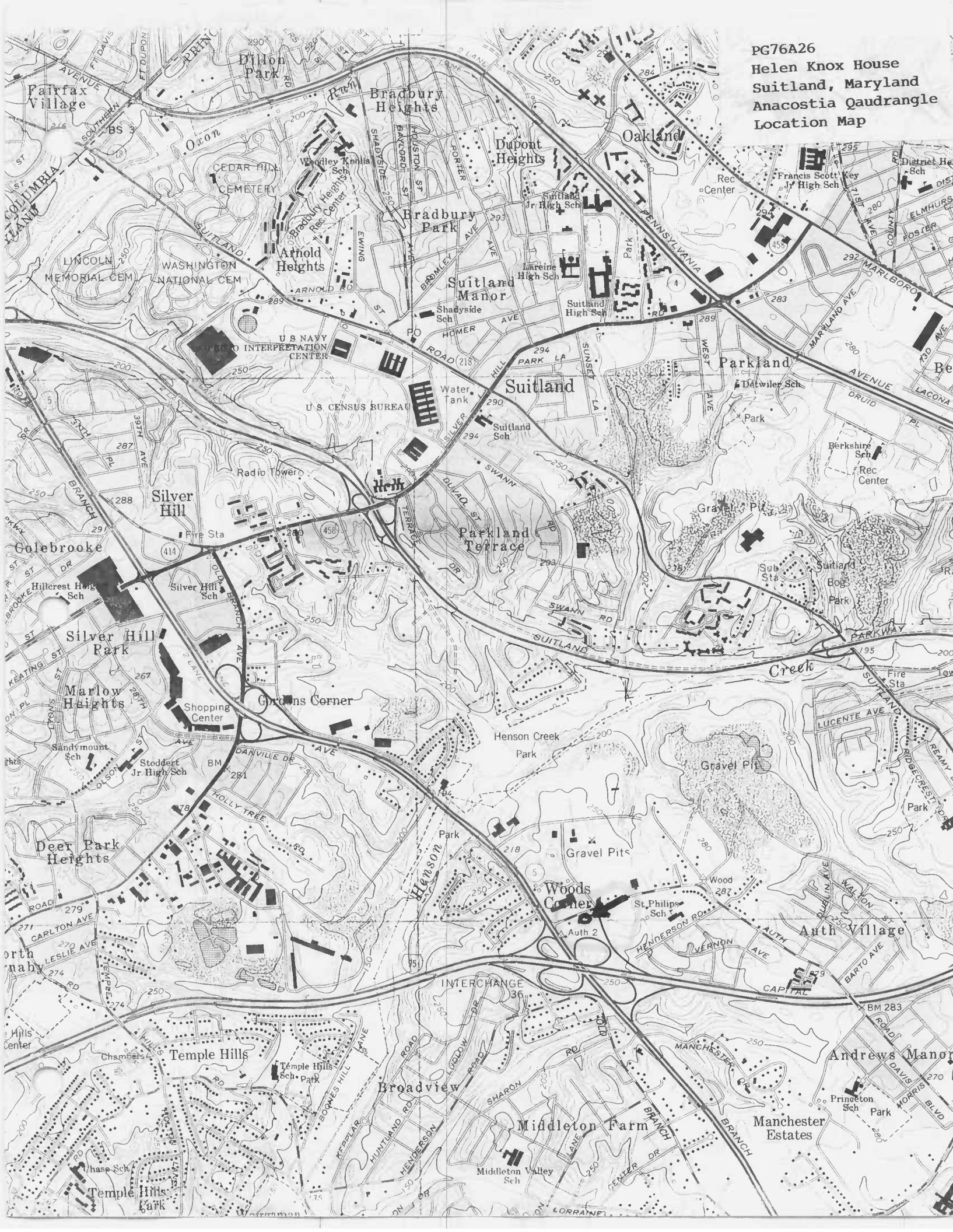
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. "Draft Supplemental EIS: Outer Branch Avenue Segment, Green Line (F) Route." Washington, D.C.: WMATA, November, 1992.

Watson, James Douglas. Prince George's County: Past and Present. Washington, D.C.: Federal Lithograph Company, 1962.





PG76A26
Helen Knox House
Suitland, Maryland
Anacostia Qaudrangle
Location Map





12-10-20

Ref. K. 2/10/20

Ref. H. 2/11/20

S.W. Corner
Dwelling

117



Page 1

He. ... of ...

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

2/7



PG 76 - 20

Nick's Knew House

Swamp

R. Swift

17000 E Highway, Adm

2497

Dweller

SE Corner

3/7



PG 7C 1-6

Helen Knight Hesse
Sutton

R Softer

MB 4-1 Highway Admin

2/97

Drilling

NE corner

4/7



Pb 76 A 26

Helen H. 11 House

Switzerland

R. Swift

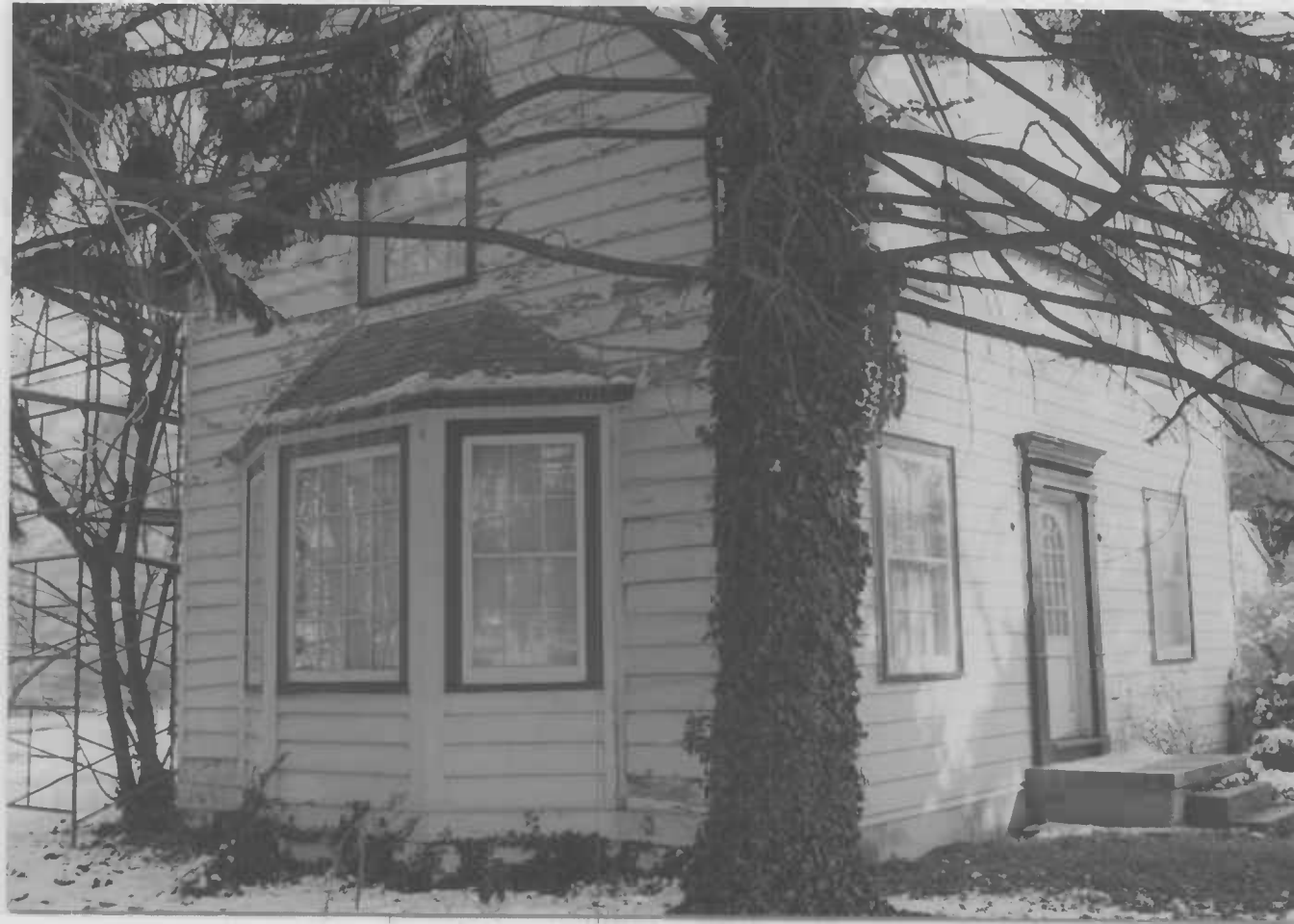
1000 State Highway 2d

21/2/7

Dr. P.

East Elevation

5/7



P.O. 76A 26

Rel. 1st. Good House

So. 1st

1st Suffer 2nd State Wing

P.O.

2/27

Dwelling

SW corner

1/7



P676A26

Helix Knox House

Twitland

1- Suffern M.D. State

Highway 12

1/97

Gauge

West Elev at

7/7